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Taking the responsibility to see the job done

The state may be remiss in fulfilling many of its transportation obligations in West Hawaii, as it is on the other islands as well, but someone has finally stepped forward to be accountable for tracking improvements and seeing something gets done.

Call it a map for progress or road sign for change, either way, it is a great step forward.

State Director of Transportation Rodney Haraga came to Kona Wednesday to discuss the state's transportation plans. That is something others have done before. He also made verbal commitments, promises. And West Hawaii knows that if promises were pavement, our roadways would be second to none.

Haraga knows it, too.

"Enough rhetoric," he said Wednesday evening. "I don't want to be known for rhetoric, I want simple solutions."

Haraga publicly at the governor's West Hawaii Advisory Committee meeting and in an editorial meeting with this newspaper, accepted direct responsibility for actions to bring the promises to fruition.

Guarantees and bonds are hard to come by in politics. Nearly as rare is personal accountability. Haraga, however, said the closest he can come to a "guarantee" that things will be done is that he will accept personal responsibility. He or one of his deputies will be here to report -- and listen.

Haraga said they will be in West Hawaii "once a month" to ensure the state follows through on its obligations.

He nailed down a construction schedule for the widening Queen Kaahumanu Highway from the airport to Palani Road, that was promised to start late last year, saying it would likely begin by April. He also pledged to have the road widened to four lanes all the way to Kawaihae in 10 years.

During his discussions, Haraga said he is aware of the state's transportation woes in West Hawaii -- clearly -- and is eager to implement solutions, especially those which will alleviate or ameliorate immediate transportation problems. While a new road might be a solution, it is a long-term solution, whereas implementing commuter "zipper" lanes could be implemented quickly and reduce commuter frustration.

Haraga said he welcomes any suggestions people in the community might have and will work to address the problems.

Politicians and government figures all are quick to recognize and repeat the problems. Few, if any, are willing to accept personal responsibility and oversight. Haraga is a rare exception.

He has stepped up to point and is prepared to walk it, knowing well that it is hazardous duty and he depends upon the support of the administration, the Legislature and community behind him if he is to be successful.

We wish him good luck in this challenge -- we all need it.

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